

The surprising life benefits of becoming a father

Source: The Institute For Public Policy Research

What benefits does beginning a family have for a man?

Less stress

As you roll out of bed for the umpteenth time in one night, you may yearn for the zen of your childless years, but research has found that fathers tend to be markedly less likely to develop stress-related conditions.

A long term study by America's National Institute of Mental Health discovered that fathers who had positive relationships with their children had increased psychological well-being.

"Dads are less likely to have chest pain, insomnia, fatigue, indigestion and dizziness," says Dr Rosalind Barnett, a psychologist who specialises in the role of work stress in the lives of men.

Job satisfaction improves

Men who have families to return to at the end of the day are happier at work, according to a study published in the Academy of Management Perspectives journal last year.

The study, which surveyed 970 working men, found that those with children were more satisfied at work – something that was seen to positively affect how well they performed.

"More involved fathers experience greater job satisfaction and work-family enrichment," researchers concluded. "They are less likely to think about quitting their jobs."

Become less selfish

Young men are frequently lambasted for being reckless, self-obsessed and self-absorbed. In fact, only recently, young white men were even labelled 'the most derided social group in Britain' for exhibiting these qualities. But get a couple of babies under your belt and all that could change, according to research by The Minnesota Fatherhood Initiative.

The Initiative discovered that men become considerably less inward-focused and develop a greater ability to nurture and care for others once they become fathers – a personality change the organisation argues will benefit not just the baby, but everyone in the new dad's life.

Less chance of becoming depressed

Despite a study last year suggesting that 1 in 8 men are likely to suffer from depression during their partner's pregnancy, once your baby is born things have been found to take a turn for the better.

Multiple studies have discovered that building a family and creating bonds with your children is one of the most effective natural anti-depressants there is. One Finnish report found that men living alone are up to 80pc more likely to be diagnosed with depression than those with families.

So, if you feel like stepping on Lego blocks on your way across the landing or reading the same picture book every night for three months is getting you down, remember that those minor inconveniences could actually be saving your life.

Physical health improves

The slightly flabby 'Dad bod' may be in vogue, (first time-fathers generally see their BMI rise by 2.6pc) but men's overall health actually improves after they become fathers.

Dr Marcus Goldman, author of The Joy of Fatherhood, says that "fatherhood comes with a lot of great health perks. Not only does it inspire men to take better care of themselves physically, but it also fills them with a sense of purpose that genuinely enhances their psychological well-being."

Goldman believes that when the responsibility of caring for another person really hits home, new fathers begin to watch what they eat, how they live, and even find it easier to overcome the illogical masculine aversion of visiting a doctor.